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A Profile on Saskatchewan Trades

Executive Summary—Labour Market Conditions for Trades

Saskatchewan currently has skilled labour shortages in almost all of the trades. Several of the trades have reached the stage of severe shortages, a situation where qualified workers are not available in local and adjacent markets to meet current demand, intense competition for workers exists throughout the province, and recruiters are forced to look in other jurisdictions for skilled labour. Labour shortages are expected to continue in the coming years with half of the trades expected to have a severe shortage of skilled workers by 2010.

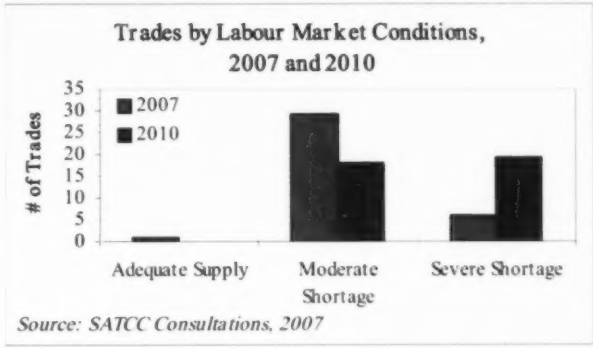
These are the findings of a survey of the trade boards, jointly undertaken by the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) and Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. In October 2007, the SATCC met with thirty-seven trade boards which had one to six members per board and included representation from employers and employees. The trade boards were asked to provide their perspective on the current and future labour market conditions of their trade by provincially ranking trades for 2007 to 2010. They were also asked to rank the 2007 labour market conditions for twelve regions in the province, indicate any current or expected staffing concerns related to the recruitment and retention of skilled workers and identify methods employers use to find workers and job seekers use to find work.

The ranking of labour market conditions is based on a scale of '1' to '5', where '1' indicates an excess supply of workers and '5' indicates a severe shortage of workers. A ranking of '3' suggests an adequate supply of workers to meet labour market demand, with some short term limitations such as plant shutdowns related to maintenance work.

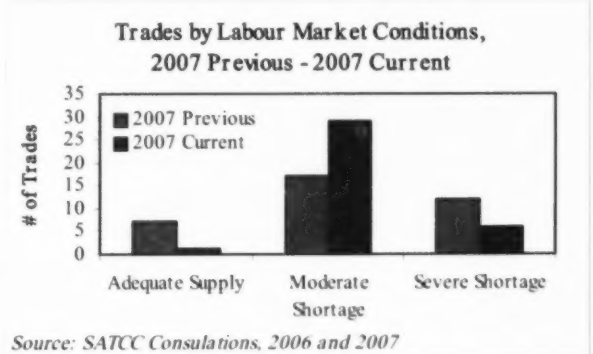
Increasing Skilled Trade Shortages are Expected

Provincially, only one trade had an adequate supply of skilled workers to meet labour market demand in 2007. The remaining trades have shortages with six of these trades experiencing severe shortages. Looking ahead to 2010, if economic and labour market trends continue, the trade boards expect to continue to have supply shortages in the province. Eighteen trades are expected to have moderate labour shortages and nineteen are expected to have severe labour shortages by this time.

Labour market conditions are considered tighter than previously assessed in 2006. In 2006, twenty-nine trades anticipated shortages for 2007 and thirty trades anticipated shortages in 2008 and 2009. Updated rankings by the trade boards in 2007 increased the number of trades expected to have



Source: SATCC Consultations, 2007



Source: SATCC Consulations, 2006 and 2007

Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour

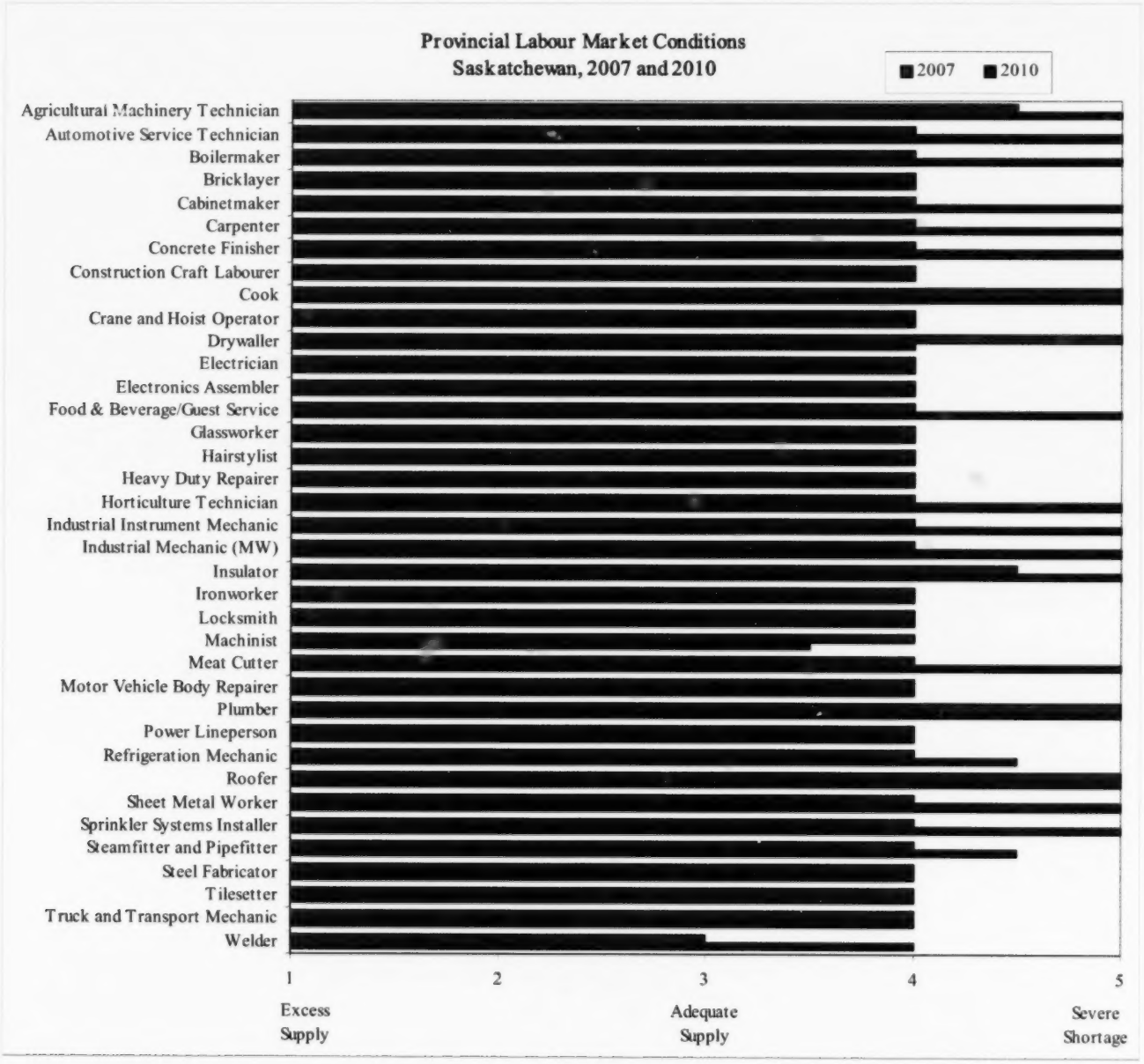
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission

shortages. In 2007, only one trade is expected to have an adequate supply of labour with all other trades experiencing shortages. In 2008 and 2009, all trades expect labour shortages.

Increasing Skill Shortages in Trades by 2010

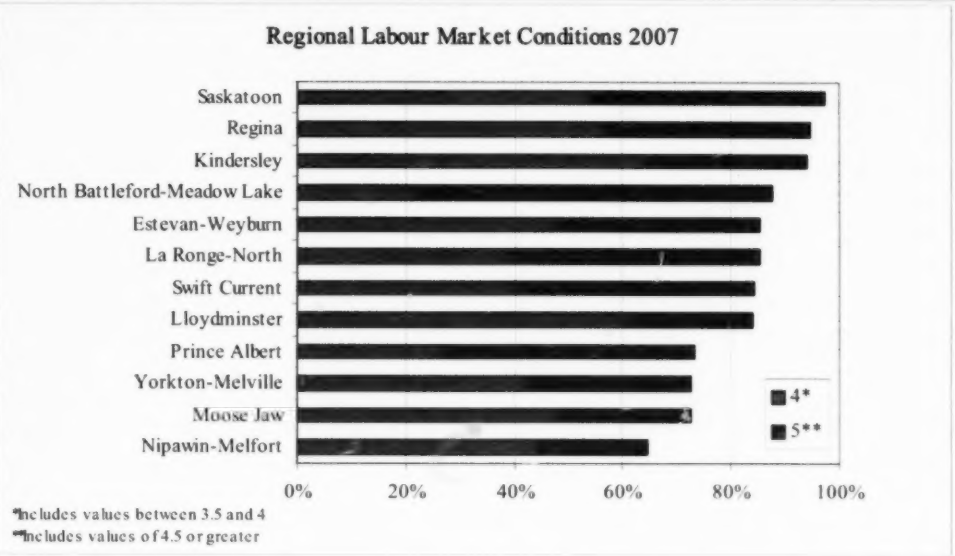
At a provincial level, almost all of the trades experienced skilled labour shortages in 2007, with increased shortages expected in the future. Thirty of the thirty-seven trades (81%) experienced moderate labour shortages while six trades (16%) experienced severe shortages. The six trades with severe shortages included: agricultural machinery technician, cook, drywaller, insulator, plumber and roofer. The only trade that did not experience a provincial labour shortage was the welder trade.

By 2010, all trades are expected to experience shortages. Eighteen of the thirty-seven trades (49%) anticipate a moderate shortage of workers while the remaining nineteen trades (51%) anticipate a severe shortage of workers.



All Regions Experiencing Shortages

All regions of the province were experiencing skilled labour shortages in almost two-thirds of the trades in 2007. Three-quarters of the regions were experiencing shortages in over 80% of the trades. Saskatoon, Regina and Kindersley were most affected, with over 90% of the trades reporting shortages. Although the Nipawin-Melfort region had the lowest number of shortages, 65% of trades in the region still experienced shortages.



Economic Growth a Major Driver

All regions are influenced by Saskatchewan's strong economy. The increase in activity throughout the province is creating opportunities in a variety of trades. Large-scale projects as well as strong activity in the manufacturing and construction industries are increasing the demand for skilled workers and attracting workers from around the province. The Saskatoon and Regina regions are experiencing acute skilled labour shortages due to activity increases in the province's two largest cities. In addition, skilled workers may be sent from Saskatoon and Regina to fill shortages in other areas of the province, therefore accentuating the shortages that are already occurring in the two cities.

Few Trades Experiencing Labour Supply Imbalances

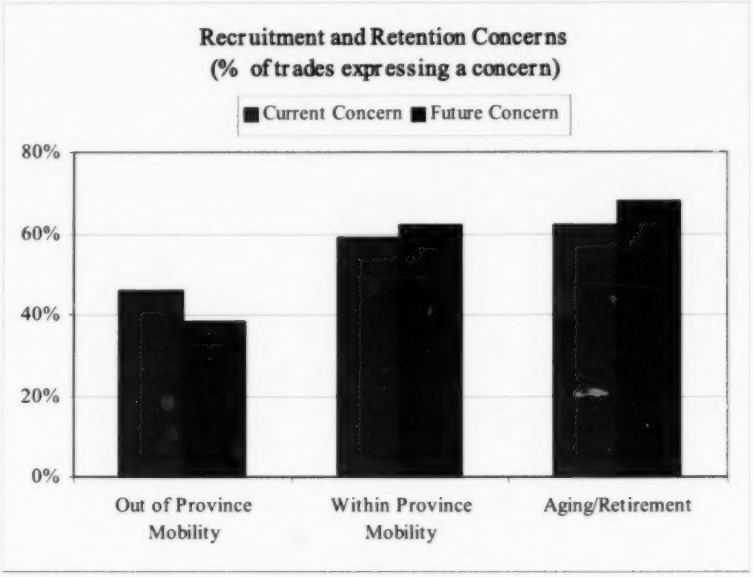
The trade boards identified five trades that appeared to have imbalances of labour supply in 2007. These trades are: boilermaker, crane and hoist operator, industrial mechanic (MW), ironworker, and welder. An imbalance of labour supply for a trade occurs when there are labour surpluses in some pockets of the province at the same time that labour shortages are occurring in others. The ironworker trade, for example, was assessed as having labour surpluses in three regions and labour shortages in four regions of the province. The 2007 provincial ranking of '4' for ironworkers indicates a labour shortage, but most of the demand for this skill is in Saskatchewan's two largest centres, Regina and Saskatoon. Limited economic activity, industry downsizing or plant closures contribute to labour surpluses and economic expansion is the leading cause of skilled labour shortages.

Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Economic growth and an aging workforce in Saskatchewan is causing increased competition for a limited supply of qualified trades people. This appears to be a particular challenge for regions that are experiencing strong labour shortages such as Saskatoon and Regina, but also for the Kindersley region. There are available pools of local labour but they are not always qualified to meet job requirements, as noted in the Prince Albert and North Battleford-Meadow Lake regions. Shortages of qualified workers can lead to project delays, or the hiring of less experienced workers which may negatively impact productivity.

Worker Mobility and Retirements a Concern

Worker mobility is a common issue for most trades, with close to two-thirds of the trade boards citing intra-provincial mobility as a concern. Employment opportunities and higher wages in other trades pose a challenge for attracting and keeping experienced tradespersons in their current employment. Inter-provincial mobility is also a concern, but not to the same extent as mobility within the province. A competitive labour market makes it more difficult to attract qualified workers to rural or remote areas of the province. The most common response for most regions is to outsource skilled labour from the major centres of Saskatoon and Regina that are able to more readily attract qualified trades people.



The aging workforce and looming retirements will be a growing issue, as 62% of the trade boards identified it as a current concern and 68% a future concern. For some of the more physically demanding trades, such as concrete finisher, qualified workers are leaving prematurely due to associated health problems. It was noted that ironworker trade workers are moving to part-time work instead of retiring which is helping to improve conditions.

Concerns about losing workers to other jurisdictions, particularly Alberta, have eased over the past year as workers have returned to Saskatchewan (although not at the same rate that workers have left in the past). Trades people are returning to Saskatchewan because of the lower cost of living and better working conditions. However, concerns about losing workers to other trades, other employers and other regions in Saskatchewan have increased over the same time period.

'Word-of-Mouth' Most Common Recruiting/Job Seeking Method

Employers who are recruiting workers and job seekers who are looking for work are using similar job posting/seeking methods.The top three recruitment/ job seeking methods are word-of-mouth, newspapers and on-line job postings. Over 90% of employers and employees use word-of-mouth as a method of recruiting or finding work. On-line job postings are used by employers 76% of the time while newspapers are used 65% of the time when looking for workers. On the other hand, employees look at newspapers 88% of the time and on-line job postings 62% of the time when looking for work.